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General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 2 October 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim . . . . . (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Maxime Bernier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada.

Mr. Bernier (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to speak before this Assembly. The United Nations is the very embodiment of the commitment we have all made to contribute to peace and security and to create better living conditions in a greater climate of freedom. For its part, the Government I represent has never ceased strengthening its actions in the international arena. The Canadian Government is a responsible partner and a fully engaged Power. We are guided by unwavering principles. Canada's commitment is not only linked to our interests, but above all to the values that inspire Canadians, which are freedom, the rule of law, democracy and human rights. They are the values underlying our presence in Afghanistan, in Haiti, in the Sudan and elsewhere in the world.

(*spoke in English*)

And they are the values and aspirations that are embodied in the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the inherent dignity and the rights of all members of the human family are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. Article 1 of the Declaration says further "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

Those are not abstract concepts. They are real and concrete concepts with effects both immediate and profound. Promoting them is not enough. They must be protected and defended, particularly when they are under assault — in Burma, in Afghanistan, in the Sudan, in Iran and elsewhere.

In Kabul, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has confirmed the desire of the United Nations to stabilize Afghanistan. Canada has engaged its political commitment and practical capabilities to rebuild security, democracy, human rights and prosperity in that country.

Canada believes that a united international community must support efforts to rebuild Afghanistan. International organizations, including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the World Bank, must work towards that common goal. No one country can do that alone. To fully implement Security Council decisions, we must work in close partnership, both with the Government of Afghanistan and with our friends and allies.

(*spoke in French*)

To ensure a successful commitment, Canada deploys the necessary resources, as with our mission in Afghanistan. Under the terms of a clear United Nations mandate, Canada joined the coalition of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. More than 60 countries and international organizations

have undertaken with us to help the democratically elected Afghan Government rebuild its country.

Canada believes that the efforts of the countries and organizations working in Afghanistan are commendable and also reflect the core principles espoused by the United Nations. The challenge is great, but the principles we are defending are greater still.

The countries assisting Afghanistan are united by a single conviction: there can be no reconstruction without security. Democracy and political stability cannot flourish in a climate of terror. Health care and education cannot be provided where anarchy prevails. Economic development is impossible when chaos is all around. Security is the crucial foundation on which everything depends, but long-term security requires sustainable investment in the country's development; one goes hand in hand with the other.

Thanks to the assistance of Canada and the international community, Afghanistan has made progress. Afghan police officers are currently being trained, Afghan refugees are returning home and Afghan children are learning to read and write. Canada is having a real and direct impact on the lives of the Afghan people and is contributing to the achievement of the vision of the future expressed in the Afghanistan Compact which was signed in 2006. In order to make that vision a reality, it is crucial that the United Nations and the Government of Afghanistan ensure the fulfilment of the Compact. And yes, despite the incidents of intimidation and violence, the situation of the Afghan people is improving.

(*spoke in English*)

Last year, Prime Minister Harper emphasized here that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was the most important special political mission of the United Nations. The Canadian Government continues to support the leadership role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. For that reason, Canada supports having a new high-level United Nations special envoy for Afghanistan.

In the past year, our Government has demonstrated its multifaceted commitment to that mission. We have increased our development spending, our diplomatic presence and our military engagement. We welcome Security Council resolution 1776 (2007). It extends the authorization of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and calls on Member States to contribute personnel, equipment and funding. The Canadian Government encourages members of the Assembly to actively support that resolution and its implementation.

(*spoke in French*)

There are other challenges we must also meet. In Haiti, the Canadian Government has asked the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. That represents Canada's most substantial development programme and its largest stabilization mission in the Americas.

In Burma, it is imperative to restore democracy and human rights. We expect the United Nations to be at the forefront of those efforts. Although we have disagreed on occasion with the decisions and processes of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the convening of a special session of the Human Rights Council on Burma is an example of the sort of activism and engagement that Canada expects of that body, especially in dealing with countries that perpetuate human rights violations.

In the Sudan, innovative peacekeeping missions are creating a security framework which will become the foundation upon which a durable peace can be built. The international community must demonstrate the political will to find new solutions. Those solutions must be aimed not only at immediately ending the horrific violations of human rights occurring daily in Darfur, but also at addressing the issues of freedom and democracy that must form the foundation for a durable peace. Canada's substantial contribution to the Sudan continues in the form of humanitarian assistance and equipment. Of course, we condemn the intolerable attack against soldiers of the African Union force.

The scope of the challenges we must overcome to maintain our security is such that no country can hope to tackle them alone. We, the Member States, can and must show the determination and political will so that the United Nations may truly reflect the principles that its founders wanted it to embody.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada is and will remain a committed partner for all those who seek to work for freedom, to work for democracy and to work for human rights and the rule of law.